

HealthWatch: Kidney Disease — Know the Warning Signs

Our kidneys play a vital role in overall health.

The kidney's main function is to act as a filter to remove waste products and excess fluid from your blood. The kidneys process 200 quarts of fluid per day, with about two quarts leaving the body in the form of urine. Other key kidney functions include releasing hormones that help regulate blood pressure, controlling red blood cell production and making vitamins that control growth.

Uncontrolled diabetes and high blood pressure are the two leading causes of kidney failure in the U.S.

To help prevent kidney problems, have your blood pressure checked regularly, eat a healthy diet and exercise regularly to maintain overall good health.

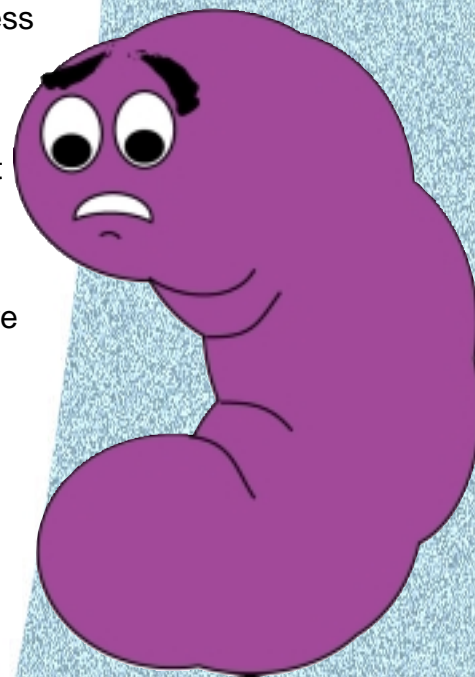
One of the primary indicators of kidney disease is an increase of creatinine in the blood. Creatinine is a protein produced by muscle. Diseased kidneys aren't as efficient as healthy kidneys in "clearing" this protein.

Some of the warning signs of kidney disease include:

- Blood or protein in the urine
- High blood pressure
- A creatinine blood level greater than 1.2 for women and 1.4 for men
- Burning or difficulty during urination
- More frequent urination, particularly at night
- Puffiness around the eyes, or swelling of the hands and feet, especially in children.

Early detection is critical in helping to maintain optimal kidney health. Talk with your healthcare provider if you feel you may have some of the warning signs of kidney disease.

For more information on kidney function and other related topics, visit the National Kidney Foundation Web site at **www.kidney.org**, or see your local MTF.



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